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# Polyharmonic maps into the Euclidean space

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**Abstract.** We study polyharmonic ( $k$ -harmonic) maps between Riemannian manifolds with finite  $j$ -energies ( $j = 1, \dots, 2k - 2$ ). We show that if the domain is complete and the target is the Euclidean space, then such a map is harmonic.

**Keywords:** harmonic map, polyharmonic map, Chen's conjecture, generalized Chen's conjecture

**MSC 2000 classification:** primary 58E20, secondary 53C43

## Introduction

This paper is an extension of our previous work ([25]) to polyharmonic maps. Harmonic maps play a central role in geometry; they are critical points of the energy functional  $E(\varphi) = \frac{1}{2} \int_M |d\varphi|^2 v_g$  for smooth maps  $\varphi$  of  $(M, g)$  into  $(N, h)$ . The Euler-Lagrange equations are given by the vanishing of the tension field  $\tau(\varphi)$ . In 1983, J. Eells and L. Lemaire [6] extended the notion of harmonic map to polyharmonic map, which are, by definition, critical points of the  $k$ -energy ( $k \geq 2$ )

$$E_k(\varphi) = \frac{1}{2} \int_M |(d + \delta)^k \varphi|^2 v_g. \quad (0.1)$$

After G.Y. Jiang [15] studied the first and second variation formulas of  $E_2$  ( $k = 2$ ), extensive studies in this area have been done (for instance, see [2], [4], [18], [19], [22], [26], [28], [12], [13], [14], etc.). Notice that harmonic maps are always polyharmonic by definition.

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For harmonic maps, it is well known that:

*If a domain manifold  $(M, g)$  is complete and has non-negative Ricci curvature, and the sectional curvature of a target manifold  $(N, h)$  is non-positive, then every energy finite harmonic map is a constant map (cf. [29]).*

In our previous paper, we showed that

**Theorem 1.** [25] *Let  $(M, g)$  be a complete Riemannian manifold, and the curvature of  $(N, h)$  is non-positive. Then,*

(1) *every biharmonic map  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  with finite energy and finite bienergy must be harmonic.*

(2) *In the case  $\text{Vol}(M, g) = \infty$ , every biharmonic map  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  with finite bienergy is harmonic.*

Now, in this paper, we want to extend it to  $k$ -harmonic maps ( $k \geq 2$ ). Indeed, we will show

**Theorem 2.** *Theorems 4 and 6 Let  $(M, g)$  be a complete Riemannian manifold, and  $(N, h)$ , the  $n$ -dimensional Euclidean space. Then,*

(1) *every  $k$ -harmonic map  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  ( $k \geq 2$ ) with finite  $j$ -energies for all  $j = 1, 2, \dots, 2k - 2$ , must be harmonic.*

(2) *In the case of  $\text{Vol}(M, g) = \infty$ , every  $k$ -harmonic map  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  with finite  $j$ -energy for all  $j = 2, 4, \dots, 2k - 2$ , is harmonic.*

Theorem 2 gives an affirmative answer to the generalized B.Y. Chen's conjecture (cf. [4]) on  $k$ -harmonic maps ( $k \geq 2$ ) under the  $L^2$ -conditions.

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## 1 Preliminaries and statement of main theorem

In this section, we prepare materials for the first variational formula for the biharmonic maps. Let us recall the definition of a harmonic map  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$ , of a compact Riemannian manifold  $(M, g)$  into another Riemannian manifold  $(N, h)$ , which is an extremal of the *energy functional* defined by

$$E(\varphi) = \int_M e(\varphi) v_g,$$

where  $e(\varphi) := \frac{1}{2}|d\varphi|^2$  is called the energy density of  $\varphi$ . That is, for any variation  $\{\varphi_t\}$  of  $\varphi$  with  $\varphi_0 = \varphi$ ,

$$\left. \frac{d}{dt} \right|_{t=0} E(\varphi_t) = - \int_M h(\tau(\varphi), V) v_g = 0, \quad (1.1)$$

where  $V \in \Gamma(\varphi^{-1}TN)$  is a variation vector field along  $\varphi$  which is given by  $V(x) = \left. \frac{d}{dt} \right|_{t=0} \varphi_t(x) \in T_{\varphi(x)}N$ , ( $x \in M$ ), and the *tension field* is given by  $\tau(\varphi) = \sum_{i=1}^m B(\varphi)(e_i, e_i) \in \Gamma(\varphi^{-1}TN)$ , where  $\{e_i\}_{i=1}^m$  is a locally defined frame field on  $(M, g)$ , and  $B(\varphi)$  is the second fundamental form of  $\varphi$  defined by

$$\begin{aligned} B(\varphi)(X, Y) &= (\tilde{\nabla} d\varphi)(X, Y) \\ &= (\tilde{\nabla}_X d\varphi)(Y) \\ &= \bar{\nabla}_X(d\varphi(Y)) - d\varphi(\nabla_X Y), \end{aligned} \quad (1.2)$$

for all vector fields  $X, Y \in \mathfrak{X}(M)$ . Here,  $\nabla$ , and  $\nabla^N$ , are the Levi-Civita connections of  $(M, g)$ ,  $(N, h)$ , respectively, and  $\bar{\nabla}$ , and  $\tilde{\nabla}$  are the induced ones on  $\varphi^{-1}TN$ , and  $T^*M \otimes \varphi^{-1}TN$ , respectively. By (2),  $\varphi$  is harmonic if and only if  $\tau(\varphi) = 0$ .

The second variation formula is given as follows. Assume that  $\varphi$  is harmonic. Then,

$$\left. \frac{d^2}{dt^2} \right|_{t=0} E(\varphi_t) = \int_M h(J(V), V) v_g, \quad (1.3)$$

where  $J$  is an elliptic differential operator, called the *Jacobi operator* acting on  $\Gamma(\varphi^{-1}TN)$  given by

$$J(V) = \bar{\Delta}V - \mathcal{R}(V), \quad (1.4)$$

where  $\bar{\Delta}V = \bar{\nabla}^* \bar{\nabla}V = - \sum_{i=1}^m \{ \bar{\nabla}_{e_i} \bar{\nabla}_{e_i} V - \bar{\nabla}_{\nabla_{e_i} e_i} V \}$  is the *rough Laplacian* and  $\mathcal{R}$  is a linear operator on  $\Gamma(\varphi^{-1}TN)$  given by  $\mathcal{R}(V) = \sum_{i=1}^m R^N(V, d\varphi(e_i)) d\varphi(e_i)$ , and  $R^N$  is the curvature tensor of  $(N, h)$  given by  $R^N(U, V) = \nabla_U^N \nabla_V^N - \nabla_V^N \nabla_U^N - \nabla_{[U, V]}^N$  for  $U, V \in \mathfrak{X}(N)$ .

J. Eells and L. Lemaire [6] proposed polyharmonic ( $k$ -harmonic) maps and Jiang [15] studied the first and second variation formulas for biharmonic maps. Let us consider the *bienergy functional* defined by

$$E_2(\varphi) = \frac{1}{2} \int_M |\tau(\varphi)|^2 v_g, \quad (1.5)$$

where  $|V|^2 = h(V, V)$ ,  $V \in \Gamma(\varphi^{-1}TN)$ . The first variation formula of the bienergy functional is given by

$$\left. \frac{d}{dt} \right|_{t=0} E_2(\varphi_t) = - \int_M h(\tau_2(\varphi), V) v_g. \quad (1.6)$$

Here,

$$\tau_2(\varphi) := J(\tau(\varphi)) = \overline{\Delta}(\tau(\varphi)) - \mathcal{R}(\tau(\varphi)), \quad (1.7)$$

which is called the *bitension field* of  $\varphi$ , and  $J$  is given in (5).

A smooth map  $\varphi$  of  $(M, g)$  into  $(N, h)$  is said to be *biharmonic* if  $\tau_2(\varphi) = 0$ .

Now let us recall the definition of the  $k$ -energy  $E_k(\varphi)$  ( $k \geq 2$ ):

**Definition 1.** The  $k$ -energy  $E_k(\varphi)$  ( $k \geq 2$ ) is defined formally ([7]) by

$$E_k(\varphi) := \frac{1}{2} \int_M |(d + \delta)^k \varphi|^2 v_g \quad (1.8)$$

for every smooth map  $\varphi \in C^\infty(M, N)$ . Then, it is given ([12], p. 270, Lemma 40) by the following formula:

$$E_k(\varphi) = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{2} \int_M |W_\varphi^\ell|^2 v_g & (\text{if } k \text{ is even, say } 2\ell), \\ \frac{1}{2} \int_M |\overline{\nabla} W_\varphi^\ell|^2 v_g & (\text{if } k \text{ is odd, say } 2\ell + 1). \end{cases} \quad (1.9)$$

Here,  $W_\varphi^\ell$  is given as, by definition,

$$W_\varphi^\ell := \underbrace{\overline{\Delta} \cdots \overline{\Delta}}_{\ell-1} \tau(\varphi) \in \Gamma(\varphi^{-1}TN). \quad (1.10)$$

For  $k = 1$ , that is,  $\ell = 0$ , we define  $W_\varphi^0 = \varphi$ , also.

Then, the definition and the first variation formula for the  $k$ -energy  $E_k$  are given as follows:

**Definition 2.**  *$k$ -harmonic map* For each  $k = 2, 3, \dots$ , and a smooth map  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$ , is  *$k$ -harmonic* if

$$\left. \frac{d}{dt} \right|_{t=0} E_k(\varphi_t) = 0 \quad (1.11)$$

for every smooth variation  $\varphi_t : M \rightarrow N$  ( $-\varepsilon < t < \varepsilon$ ) with  $\varphi_0 = \varphi$ .

Then, we have ([12], p.269, Theorem 39)

**Theorem 3.** *The first variation formula of the  $k$ -energy* Assume that  $(N, h) = (\mathbb{R}^n, h_{\mathbb{R}^n})$  is the  $n$ -dimensional Euclidean space. For every  $k = 2, 3, \dots$ , it holds that

$$\left. \frac{d}{dt} \right|_{t=0} E_k(\varphi_t) = - \int_M \langle \tau_k(\varphi), V \rangle v_g, \quad (1.12)$$

where  $V$  is a variation vector field given by  $V(x) = \frac{d}{dt}|_{t=0}\varphi_t(x) \in T_{\varphi(x)}N$  ( $x \in M$ ). The  $k$ -tension field  $\tau_k(\varphi)$  is given by

$$\tau_k(\varphi) = J(W_\varphi^{k-1}) = \overline{\Delta}(W_\varphi^{k-1}), \quad (1.13)$$

where  $W_\varphi^{k-1} = \underbrace{\overline{\Delta} \cdots \overline{\Delta}}_{k-2} \tau(\varphi) \in \Gamma(\varphi^{-1}TN)$ .

Thus,  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  is  $k$ -harmonic if and only if  $\overline{\Delta}^{k-1} \tau(\varphi) = 0$  which is equivalent to  $W_\varphi^k = 0$ .

Notice that the formula (14) of the  $k$ -tension field  $\tau_k(\varphi)$  coincides with the  $k$ -tension field in Theorems 2.2 and 2.3 in [21] in the case that the target space  $(N, h)$  is the  $n$ -dimensional Euclidean space  $(N, h) = (\mathbb{R}^n, h_{\mathbb{R}^n})$  because of  $R^N \equiv 0$ .

Here, we denote by  $\overline{\nabla} W_\varphi^\ell = \overline{\nabla} \varphi = d\varphi$  for  $\ell = 0$ , and  $k = 2\ell + 1 = 1$ ,

$$E_1(\varphi) = \frac{1}{2} \int_M |d\varphi|^2 v_g.$$

Then, we can state our main theorem.

**Theorem 4. Main theorem** Assume that the domain manifold  $(M, g)$  is a complete Riemannian manifold, and the target space  $(N, h)$  is the  $n$ -dimensional Euclidean space. Let  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  be a  $k$ -harmonic map ( $k \geq 2$ ). Assume that

(1)  $E_j(\varphi) < \infty$  for all  $j = 2, 4, \dots, 2k - 2$ , and

(2) either

$E_j(\varphi) < \infty$  for all  $j = 1, 3, \dots, 2k - 3$ , or

$\text{Vol}(M, g) = \infty$ .

Then,  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  is harmonic.

In the case of the  $n$ -dimensional Euclidean space  $(N, h) = (\mathbb{R}^n, h_{\mathbb{R}^n})$ , Theorem 4 and the following Theorem 5 are natural extensions of our previous theorem in [25] which is:

**Theorem 5.** Assume that  $(M, g)$  is complete and the sectional curvature of  $(N, h)$  is non-positive.

(1) Every biharmonic map  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  with finite energy  $E(\varphi) < \infty$  and finite bienergy  $E_2(\varphi) < \infty$ , is harmonic.

(2) In the case  $\text{Vol}(M, g) = \infty$ , every biharmonic map  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  with finite bienergy  $E_2(\varphi) < \infty$ , is harmonic.

## 2 The iteration proposition.

By virtue of (10), we have to notice the the energy conditions in (1) and (2) of Theorem 4:

Indeed, the condition which  $E_j(\varphi) < \infty$  for all  $j = 2, 4, \dots, 2k - 2$  in (1) of Theorem 4 is equivalent to that

$$\int_M |W_\varphi^j|^2 v_g < \infty \quad (j = 1, 2, \dots, k - 1), \quad (2.1)$$

and the condition which  $E_j(\varphi) < \infty$  for all  $j = 1, 3, \dots, 2k - 3$  in (2) of Theorem 4 is equivalent to that

$$\int_M |\bar{\nabla} W_\varphi^j|^2 v_g < \infty \quad (j = 0, 1, \dots, k - 2). \quad (2.2)$$

Therefore, to show Theorem 4, we only have to prove the following theorem:

**Theorem 6.** *Assume that the domain manifold  $(M, g)$  is a complete Riemannian manifold, and the target space  $(N, h)$  is the  $n$ -dimensional Euclidean space. Let  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  be a  $k$ -harmonic map.*

*Assume that*

$$(1) \quad \int_M |W_\varphi^j|^2 v_g < \infty \text{ for all } j = 1, 2, \dots, k - 1, \text{ and}$$

(2) *either*

$$\int_M |\bar{\nabla} W_\varphi^j|^2 v_g < \infty \text{ for all } j = 0, 1, \dots, k - 2, \text{ or}$$

$$\text{Vol}(M, g) = \infty.$$

*Then,  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  is harmonic.*

To prove Theorem 6 whose proof will be given in the next section, we need the following iteration proposition:

**Proposition 1. the iteration method** *Let  $(M, g)$  be a complete Riemannian manifold, and  $(N, h)$ , an arbitrary Riemannian manifold. Let  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  be an arbitrary  $C^\infty$  map satisfying that for some  $j \geq 2$ ,*

$$W_\varphi^j = 0. \quad (2.3)$$

*If we assume the following two conditions:*

$$\begin{cases} (1) & \int_M |W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g < \infty, \text{ and} \\ (2) & \text{either } \int_M |\bar{\nabla} W_\varphi^{j-2}|^2 v_g < \infty \text{ or } \text{Vol}(M, g) = \infty, \end{cases} \quad (2.4)$$

then, we have

$$W_\varphi^{j-1} = 0. \quad (2.5)$$

**Remark 1.** Under the assumptions (16), if we have  $W_\varphi^k = 0$  for some  $k \geq 2$ , then we have automatically,  $W_\varphi^1 = \tau(\varphi) = 0$ , i.e.,  $\varphi$  is harmonic.

In this section, we give a proof of Proposition 1 which consists of four steps.

(The first step) For a fixed point  $x_0 \in M$ , and for every  $0 < r < \infty$ , we first take a cut-off  $C^\infty$  function  $\eta$  on  $M$  (for instance, see [16]) satisfying that

$$\begin{cases} 0 \leq \eta(x) \leq 1 & (x \in M), \\ \eta(x) = 1 & (x \in B_r(x_0)), \\ \eta(x) = 0 & (x \notin B_{2r}(x_0)), \\ |\nabla \eta| \leq \frac{2}{r} & (x \in M). \end{cases} \quad (2.6)$$

(The second step) Notice that (17) is equivalent to that

$$\bar{\Delta} W_\varphi^{j-1} = 0 \quad (2.7)$$

because of  $W_\varphi^j = \bar{\Delta} W_\varphi^{j-1}$ .

Then, we have

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= \int_M \langle \eta^2 W_\varphi^{j-1}, \bar{\Delta} W_\varphi^{j-1} \rangle v_g \\ &= \int_M \sum_{i=1}^m \langle \bar{\nabla}_{e_i}(\eta^2 W_\varphi^{j-1}), \bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-1} \rangle v_g \\ &= \int_M \eta^2 \sum_{i=1}^m |\bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g + 2 \int_M \sum_{i=1}^m \eta e_i(\eta) \langle W_\varphi^{j-1}, \bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-1} \rangle v_g. \end{aligned} \quad (2.8)$$

By moving the second term in the last equality of (22) to the left hand side, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \int_M \eta^2 \sum_{i=1}^m |\bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 &= -2 \int_M \sum_{i=1}^m \langle \eta \bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-1}, e_i(\eta) W_\varphi^{j-1} \rangle v_g \\ &= -2 \int_M \sum_{i=1}^m \langle S_i, T_i \rangle v_g, \end{aligned} \quad (2.9)$$

where we put  $S_i := \eta \bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-1}$ , and  $T_i := e_i(\eta) W_\varphi^{j-1}$  ( $i = 1 \dots, m$ ).

Now let recall the following inequality:

$$\pm 2 \langle S_i, T_i \rangle \leq \varepsilon |S_i|^2 + \frac{1}{\varepsilon} |T_i|^2 \quad (2.10)$$

for all positive  $\varepsilon > 0$  because of the inequality  $0 \leq |\sqrt{\varepsilon} S_i \pm \frac{1}{\sqrt{\varepsilon}} T_i|^2$ . Therefore, for (24), we obtain

$$-2 \int_M \sum_{i=1}^m \langle S_i, T_i \rangle v_g \leq \varepsilon \int_M \sum_{i=1}^m |S_i|^2 v_g + \frac{1}{\varepsilon} \int_M \sum_{i=1}^m |T_i|^2 v_g. \quad (2.11)$$

If we put  $\varepsilon = \frac{1}{2}$ , we obtain, by (23) and (25),

$$\begin{aligned} \int_M \eta^2 \sum_{i=1}^m |\bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g &\leq \frac{1}{2} \int_M \sum_{i=1}^m \eta^2 |\bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g \\ &\quad + 2 \int_M \sum_{i=1}^m e_i(\eta)^2 |W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g. \end{aligned} \quad (2.12)$$

Thus, by (26) and (20), we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \int_M \eta^2 \sum_{i=1}^m |\bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g &\leq 4 \int_M |\nabla \eta|^2 |W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g \\ &\leq \frac{16}{r^2} \int_M |W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g. \end{aligned} \quad (2.13)$$

(The third step) By definition of  $\eta$  in the first step, (27) turns out that

$$\int_{B_r(x_0)} |\bar{\nabla} W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g \leq \frac{16}{r^2} \int_M |W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g. \quad (2.14)$$

Here, recall our assumption that  $(M, g)$  is complete and non-compact, and (1)  $\int_M |W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g < \infty$ . When we tend  $r \rightarrow \infty$ , the right hand side of (26) goes to zero, and the left hand side of (26) goes to  $\int_M |\bar{\nabla} W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g$ . Thus, we obtain

$$0 \leq \int_M |\bar{\nabla} W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g \leq 0,$$

which implies that

$$\bar{\nabla} W_\varphi^{j-1} = 0 \quad (2.15)$$

everywhere on  $M$ .



(The fourth step) (a) In the case that  $\int_M |\bar{\nabla} W_\varphi^{j-2}|^2 v_g < \infty$ , let us define a smooth 1-form  $\alpha$  on  $M$  by

$$\alpha(X) := \langle W_\varphi^{j-1}, \bar{\nabla}_X W_\varphi^{j-2} \rangle \quad (X \in \mathfrak{X}(M)). \quad (2.16)$$

Then, we have:

$$\operatorname{div}(\alpha) = -|W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2. \quad (2.17)$$

Because we have

$$\begin{aligned} \operatorname{div}(\alpha) &= \sum_{i=1}^m (\nabla_{e_i} \alpha)(e_i) \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^m \{e_i(\alpha(e_i)) - \alpha(\nabla_{e_i} e_i)\} \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^m \left\{ e_i \left( \langle W_\varphi^{j-1}, \bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-2} \rangle \right) - \langle W_\varphi^{j-1}, \bar{\nabla}_{\nabla_{e_i} e_i} W_\varphi^{j-2} \rangle \right\} \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^m \left\{ \langle \bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-1}, \bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-2} \rangle + \langle W_\varphi^{j-1}, \bar{\nabla}_{e_i} \bar{\nabla}_{e_i} W_\varphi^{j-2} \rangle \right. \\ &\quad \left. - \langle W_\varphi^{j-1}, \bar{\nabla}_{\nabla_{e_i} e_i} W_\varphi^{j-2} \rangle \right\} \\ &= \langle W_\varphi^{j-1}, -\bar{\Delta} W_\varphi^{j-2} \rangle \quad (\text{because of (29) and definition of } \bar{\Delta}) \\ &= -|W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2, \end{aligned} \quad (2.18)$$

which is (31).

Furthermore, we have

$$\int_M |\alpha| v_g < \infty. \quad (2.19)$$

Because we have, by definition of  $\alpha$  in (30),

$$\begin{aligned} \int_M |\alpha| v_g &= \int_M |\langle W_\varphi^{j-1}, \bar{\nabla} W_\varphi^{j-2} \rangle| v_g \\ &\leq \left( \int_M |W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g \right)^{\frac{1}{2}} \left( \int_M |\bar{\nabla} W_\varphi^{j-2}|^2 v_g \right)^{\frac{1}{2}} \\ &< \infty \end{aligned} \quad (2.20)$$

because of our assumptions  $\int_M |W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g < \infty$  and  $\int_M |\bar{\nabla} W_\varphi^{j-2}|^2 v_g < \infty$ . Thus, we can apply Gaffney's theorem to this  $\alpha$  (cf. [10], and Theorem 4.1 in

Appendix in [25]). We obtain

$$0 = \int_M \operatorname{div}(\alpha) v_g = - \int_M |W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g, \quad (2.21)$$

which implies that  $W_\varphi^{j-1} = 0$ .

(b) In the case that  $\operatorname{Vol}(M, g) = \infty$ , we first notice that  $|W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2$  is constant on  $M$ , say  $C_0$ . Because for every  $X \in \mathfrak{X}(M)$ , we have

$$X |W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 = 2 \langle \bar{\nabla}_X W_\varphi^{j-1}, W_\varphi^{j-1} \rangle = 0 \quad (2.22)$$

due to (29). Then, due to the assumption (1) of Proposition 1, and the above, we obtain

$$\infty > \int_M |W_\varphi^{j-1}|^2 v_g = C_0 \int_M v_g = C_0 \operatorname{Vol}(M, g). \quad (2.23)$$

By our assumption that  $\operatorname{Vol}(M, g) = \infty$ , (37) implies that  $C_0 = 0$ . We obtain  $W_\varphi^{j-1} \equiv 0$ . We obtain Proposition 1.  $\square$

*Proof of Theorem 6.* We apply Proposition 1 to our map  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$ , then the iteration procedure works well since  $\varphi$  is  $k$ -harmonic, i.e.,  $W_\varphi^k = 0$ . Then, we have  $W_\varphi^{k-1} = 0$ , and then we have  $W_\varphi^{k-2} = 0$ , etc. Finally, we obtain  $\tau(\varphi) = W_\varphi^1 = 0$ . Thus,  $\varphi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h)$  is harmonic. We obtain Theorem 6.  $\square$

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